

On the value of social reproduction

Informal labour, the majority world and the need for inclusive theories and politics

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Radical feminist analyses have always placed considerable emphasis on the crucial role played by social reproduction for the development of capitalism. Early social reproduction analyses – primarily premised on housework but also more broadly concerned with wagelessness – developed a robust critique of Marxian views that identified processes of value-generation only with the productive sphere, and *de facto* deployed ‘productive’ and ‘paid’ labour as synonyms.¹ Some more recent approaches, by contrast, propose social reproduction as a ‘theory’ (SRT), and deploy the concept in order to focus on how labour is regenerated daily and inter-generationally through private and public institutions in contemporary contexts.² This second set of studies seem concerned with analysing the circuits of care that reproduce the worker as *connected yet distinct* to those of capital and value-generation. At the same time, however, they are committed to avoiding what they consider ‘dual theories’, conceptualising patriarchy and capitalism as separate systems.³

Starting from a review of the social reproduction debate, old and new, and focusing on the rise and spread of informal and informalised labour, the following analysis argues that only interpretations of social reproduction activities and realms *as value-producing* can advance our understandings of labour relations of contemporary capitalism. In fact, reproductive activities and realms play a key role in shaping such relations and in the processes of surplus extraction they are embedded in, particularly, (al-

beit not only), developing regions; that is, in the ‘majority world’. Specifically, this analysis argues that reproductive realms and activities contribute to processes of value-generation through three channels: first, by directly reinforcing patterns of labour control, expanding rates of exploitation; second, by absorbing the systematic externalisation of reproductive costs by capital, working as a *de-facto* subsidy to capital; and, third, through processes of formal subsumption of labour that remain endemic across the majority world. I conclude that the exclusion of informal and informalised labour from debates on the relation between social reproduction and value creation will inevitably lead to problematic – in fact, dualist – understandings of capitalist development. I discuss by way of conclusion the political relevance of stressing the value-producing nature of wagelessness for a politics (and theory) of inclusion, able to capture the leading features of the contemporary world of labour, and aimed at building solidarities between productive and reproductive struggles.

Social reproduction debates, new and old

The recent publication of Tithi Bhattacharya’s edited collection *Social Reproduction Theory* (2017) has revamped debates on social reproduction, and its role and (re)configuration under capitalism. The collection aims at making a number of contributions. First, it proposes to engage in a Marxian theorisation of class where social op-

pression is not treated in merely epiphenomenal terms, but rather is seen as co-constitutive of processes of class formation.⁴ Second, it aims at illustrating the process of reconfiguration and commodification of social reproduction during the neoliberal phase of capitalism. The essay by Nancy Fraser stands out in this regard by virtue of its ability to re-sketch the whole history of capitalism in terms of different regimes of social reproduction, and in its analysis of the current neoliberal phase;⁵ while Susan Ferguson's essay on childhood also significantly contributes to our understanding of neoliberal 'socialisation'. Third, the collection aspires to 'reconcile' Marxian and feminist analyses of capitalism, in the context of a 'unitary theory' of capitalism.⁶ While the agenda of this project is certainly worthy, and the book succeeds in confirming the key role that social reproduction plays in contemporary capitalism, some of the contributions are, arguably, overly adversarial towards other theorisations moved by compatible intellectual and political concerns – for instance, David McNally's rather selective critique of intersectionality theory – or towards older analyses of social reproduction.⁷ The latter is the main object of discussion here. Specifically, some social reproduction theory (SRT) studies do not sufficiently acknowledge the huge contributions made by early social reproduction analyses in explaining the role played by reproductive realms and activities in structuring capitalism and generating value by producing the 'unique' commodity, labour power.⁸ In fact, one could argue that the very packaging of social reproduction as a 'theory' might be seen – rightly or wrongly – as an attempt to reincorporate earlier analyses into a somewhat broader (Marxist) remit.

On the other hand, undoubtedly one of the most contentious areas of difference between the 'old' and 'new' social reproduction debates is the role that social reproduction does or does not play in processes of value-generation. This is by no means a minor issue within Marxist debates. In fact, if, for some, the greatness of early radical feminist analyses of social reproduction lay, among other things, in their subversive approach to what constitutes value, for others it is this that constitutes their limitation. The analysis that follows aims to underline the strong theoretical foundations of the early social reproduction debate and its take on value. It also aims at illustrating why, focusing on the contemporary world of informal and informalised labour, and so shift-

ing attention from 'The West' to 'The Rest'⁹ – namely, the *majority* world, where the lion's share of the people on this planet labour – we cannot easily dismiss these earlier analyses and claims. In fact, once we move away from western-centric analyses and study the features of actually existing labour relations for the majority of people globally, we come to appreciate the role that social reproduction plays in processes of labour surplus extraction and value-generation. In short, from the perspective of the livelihood of the majority world, social reproduction is indeed value-generating, and in a Marxian sense.

The (great) value of social reproduction: the early debate

There is little doubt that, in relation to issues of value and wagelessness, the social reproduction debate first originated with the publication in 1972 of *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* by Selma James and Maria Rosa Dalla Costa. This largely political pamphlet, which focused on housework but was more broadly concerned with wagelessness, was the first to highlight how capitalism was first and foremost dependent on processes of generation and regeneration – biological as well as social – of the worker and of commodity labour power, which mostly took place outside what were considered the classic domains of production and value-generation. While the pamphlet hardly engaged in an in-depth theoretical analysis of how social reproduction generated value, following its publication several radical feminist scholars sought to provide the argument with the theoretical depth it deserved.

Looking at housework but also at sex work, Leopoldina Fortunati explored the ways in which reproductive work is *de facto* socially constructed as the realm of 'non-value' within productivist schemas, and hence was excluded from orthodox Marxian understandings of value-generation. She argued that its non-valorisation should therefore be considered as a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy.¹⁰ Silvia Federici's feminist analysis of primitive accumulation as a brutally gendered process entailing the dispossession, devaluation and domestication of women, and the barbaric destruction of their bodies through witchcraft accusations and trials, is also constructed around a similar theoretical project. In *Caliban and the Witch*, whose earlier version in Italian was in fact co-

written with Leopoldina Fortunati (*Il Grande Calibano*), Federici shows how capitalism was first and foremost built on imperial and colonial dispossession, and on the expropriation and exclusion of some cohorts of people from realms of generation (or appropriation) of value. Her feminist theorisation of primitive accumulation illustrates how all these events predated the far better known processes of land enclosure usually considered to characterise the initial phases of capitalism.¹¹ Equally, Federici's project aimed to subvert more traditional analyses of value, by showing the complex (and bloody) politics and history delineating its social perimeters and boundaries, which stretch far beyond transformations in the sphere of production. The entire work of the German feminist sociologist Maria Mies, which started off with her magisterial 1982 analysis of the *Lacemakers of Narsapur* in Andhra Pradesh, India, also aims at debunking the mythology of value as merely generated within productive realms. Indeed, Mies' analysis of home-based work challenges theorisations that propose a neat sep-

aration between the realms of production and reproduction, and suggests how processes of *housewifisation* of women's labour have systematically blurred sources of value, both by hiding women's productive contributions to the market, and by devaluing those contributions as non-value-producing. Mies expanded these insights into housewifisation further in *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*,¹² where, like Federici, she also analyses at length the interconnections between patriarchy and capitalism in relation to imperialism.¹³ Here, Mies analyses the variation of housewifisation across the world economy. In fact, the work of Rhoda Reddock illustrates how this played out very differently for female slaves and indentured labourers.¹⁴ For these women, housewifisation primarily worked to contain the rising costs of death or sexually transmitted diseases for slaves and plantation labourers. This is a point also made by Angela Y. Davis in *Women, Race and Class*, with specific reference to black women slaves in the United States.¹⁵



A far less well-known author, internationally, is the Marxian feminist economist Antonella Picchio, who arrives at similar conclusions about the exclusion of socially reproductive activities from sources of value. In fact, by proposing a compelling exploration of the ways in which the cost of labour has been treated in classical political economy, not only by Marx but also by Adam Smith and David Ricardo, Picchio highlights how the exclusion of reproductive activities from value calculations is not only a political issue, but one derived from the ways in which the whole *corpus* of classical political economy dealt with the *value* of labour; namely, as an exogenous parameter given by the general reproductive conditions of a given society at a given point in time. This treatment of the value of labour as an exogenous factor, then, facilitated its inaccurate conflation with its cost, namely the wage, instead of regarding it as endogenous to the capitalist system. On the other hand, who is waged and who is unwaged has always been a largely political – in fact, legal – issue, as Picchio goes on to demonstrate with reference to the British Poor Laws, and their legal, gendered distinction between abled (that is, male) and unable bodies.¹⁶

Undoubtedly, it is the reification and fetishisation of the wage as the value rather than the cost of labour that provides the premises for productivist understandings of value generation.¹⁷ Obviously, productivist Marxist understandings do not theorise the wage as the ‘true’ value of labour, as they must account for the rate of exploitation. However, they do aim to resolve the issue of the value of the commodity labour-power within the same schema that deploys it as the measure of the value of all other commodities.¹⁸ In fact, this is the main problem with productivist analyses. They want to stretch the labour theory of value far beyond its proposed remit; namely the realm of commodity production. Specifically, they try to deploy the theory in order to assess the value of the commodity that is set as the very measure of value itself; that is, labour-power. This results in a paradox. The ‘special’ commodity ‘labour-power’, whilst recognised and celebrated as unique by the SRT approach, seems to receive the same rather poor treatment as any other ‘vulgar’ one, when it comes to its value.

The centrality of the labour theory of value to Marxian analyses of capitalism is, of course, a much-debated issue. Recently, David Harvey, for instance, has

questioned the extent to which one can find a coherent ‘theory’ of value in Marx, or if, instead, the original Marxian analysis aimed primarily at showing the limitation of Ricardian understandings of value.¹⁹ Indeed, the biggest lesson from Marx should be that all value is generated by labour in production, and is not the result of capitalist efforts to combine production ‘inputs’. In this sense, as brilliantly put by another feminist economist, Diane Elson, more than a labour-theory of value in Marx one finds a value-theory of labour.²⁰ However, I do not feel one has to go as far as posing more complex ontological questions about the labour theory of value in order to build the case for the value-producing nature of social reproduction. One has simply to remark how the question lies entirely outside the remit of the labour theory of value. On the other hand, as SRT acknowledges – in line with the earlier social reproduction feminist scholars analysed above – Marx is mostly silent about the circuits producing the most extraordinary commodity of all under capitalism; namely, the worker.

Marx’s silence can be taken in different ways. One way of addressing this theoretical gap is to stretch the labour theory of value to also include how the worker is produced under capitalism. This seems to be the choice of many within SRT, who stress the relevance of the distinction between use value and exchange value when it comes to differentiating ‘labour’ (seen as a use value) and ‘labour power’ (an exchange value, once productively consumed). This view, which falls within a more orthodox Marxian interpretation, would tend to club together all activities apt at reproducing ‘labour’ as linked to use value and hence as non-value-producing, and all those linked to labour-power as value-producing. This is the path undertaken by the Marxist scholar Paul Smith, who some of these analyses rely on.²¹ Smith dismissed the issue of housework producing value precisely on the basis of the use value / exchange value distinction, deriving from this dualism the impossibility for reproductive work to ever become social labour. However, this view seems merely tautological. It does not demonstrate that social reproduction is not value-producing; it assumes it.

Another way of addressing the theoretical gap related to the production and reproduction of capitalist ‘life’ – namely, human beings as well as the capitalist relations of production of which they are part²² – is simply to accept the far more limited remit of the labour theory

of value, whose reach, for Marxian analysis, was only ever to be understood as working within the realm of capitalist commodity production. In short, rather than obsessing about how to theorise social reproduction and the 'making' of the worker, one could simply note that this question never was the subject of the original Marxian analysis of value in the first place. It was not simply an omission;²³ it was not its key concern. So, while the theoretical observations of early social reproduction analysts on value are sadly often dismissed on the basis of their supposed overly 'emotive' or 'emotional' drive – in fact, a stereotypical criticism widely deployed to attack women writers – I would argue that accounts that remain rigidly caged within the labour theory of value, whilst exploring processes residing outside its focus, are far more irrational, theoretically shaky and emotionally driven.²⁴ Moreover, empirical evidence concerning *actually existing labour and labour relations* for the majority on this planet suggests the need to account for the value-producing nature of reproductive realms and activities. It is to this issue that I now turn.

From the West to the 'Rest'

Geography always matters for the ways in which we explore the world and interpret its logics. So it is highly significant that early feminist theorists of social reproduction, eager to insist on the value-producing nature of social reproduction, were either based in or studying countries where wagelessness – and not only narrowly related to housework – was endemic. For example, Dalla Costa, Fortunati and Picchio are Italian scholars whose enquiry is not only likely to have been affected by the considerable presence of women's unpaid housework in Italy (and elsewhere), but also by the broader conditions of wagelessness and informality that characterised – and still characterise – Italian development as a whole.²⁵ Silvia Federici's thought was clearly influenced by observations about the conditions of work of women and men in former colonies during the Fordist and Post-Fordist phases.²⁶ Maria Mies studied India throughout her life, and her observation of home-based work and *housewifisation* in Narsapur was clearly crucial to the development of her entire body of work.

By contrast, scholars within the SRT group generally focus on Europe and North America. Indeed, their focus

on the institutions and capitalist architecture of care and their transformations during neoliberalism makes a lot of sense in relation to the trajectories of these regions. However, these regions are not representative of the world economy as a whole. Moreover, social reproduction and care are not synonyms, an inaccuracy that already characterises some of the work of liberal feminist economics analyses. The very term social reproduction, as also acknowledged by SRT, is meant to be far broader than notions of care, and encapsulates both the reproduction of life and of capitalist relations *at once*;²⁷ that is, of both labourers and labour power. However, not many within the SRT camp – and virtually none of the contributors to the SRT edited volume – focus on labour relations and practices or the labour process. In fact, SRT seems primarily concerned with what Lasslett and Johanna Brenner have already defined as 'societal reproduction', hence moving the gaze of the analysis towards more classic Marxist notions of reproduction concerned with the transmission of inequality under capitalism.²⁸ While this is indeed a worthy area of enquiry, it risks narrowing down the social reproduction debate. Moreover, focusing primarily on institutions, it is hard to address concerns over the nature and boundaries of value, insofar as its source, in Marxian analysis, is *labour*. Arguably, once we shift attention from the institutions of care (or social reproduction more narrowly defined) to the labour relations dominant under contemporary capitalism, and we shift our geographical focus from 'the West' to 'the Rest'²⁹ – that is, we look at the majority world and how it toils – we cannot so easily dismiss the subversive, radical claims of early feminist theorists of social reproduction.

The majority of people on this planet labour in the informal economy, or are subject to labour relations that are greatly informalised. According to the International Labour Organisation, 85.8% of total employment in Africa, 71.4% in Asia and the Pacific, 68.6% in the Arab States and 53.8% in the Americas is either informal – located in the informal economy – or informalised – in formal production realms but still *de facto* based on informal relations.³⁰ The total estimate of informal employment for the whole emerging and developing economies bloc is set at 69.6%. Given the considerable weight of this bloc vis-à-vis the world's total workforce, even at a world level (i.e. including developed regions) 61.2% of total employment is classified as either informal or informalised. This

huge world of informal and informalised employment includes casual labourers and the self-employed, who can either be highly vulnerable petty commodity producers³¹ or various disguised forms of wage labour, also known as ‘classes of labour’.³² Once upon a time wrongly considered one of the key features of ‘backwardness’, and of the domestic ‘traditional’ socio-economic fabric of developing regions, informality has not only reproduced itself exponentially during the neoliberal global era, but it has also found new channels of transmission.³³ These channels are systematically continuing to reproduce labour as a highly precarious relation in developing contexts, and are now also doing so in developed regions, with the rise of the gig economy, crowd-work and what has been called, rightly or wrongly, the ‘precariat’.³⁴

The rise of global commodity chains and production networks, in particular, has produced endless circuits of propagation, redefinition and expansion for informal labour relations. In surplus labour economies like India or China, global commodity chains can rely on labour being informalised in myriad different ways. Informalisation can be based on rural-urban mobility and mediated by legal status, as in the case of China and its reliance on the *hukou* system,³⁵ which mediates the movement of around three hundred million migrants from villages to cities every year. Alternatively, it can rely on ‘traditional’ forms of social stratification interweaving social oppression with class, as in the case of India, where informalised labour is structured along gender, caste and mobility lines, shaping forms of ‘conjugated oppression’³⁶ and where surplus value extraction interacts with subordination to regimes of social stigma.³⁷

Crucially for the arguments developed here, within this complex scenario of endemic and ever-expanding informal and informalised labour relations, it would be hard and completely misleading to try to distinguish between value-producing and non-value-producing activities and realms, strictly based on tasks and/or payments. In fact, an analysis of how exploitation unfolds in these contexts suggests that social reproduction realms and activities are directly crucial to the structuring of processes of labour surplus extraction; expand rates of exploitation; and hence build (exchange) value. In particular, there are at least three ways in which reproductive realms and activities become directly value-producing.

The first is through their ability to deepen labour

control far beyond work-time. Evidence from China,³⁸ Vietnam,³⁹ the Czech Republic,⁴⁰ and also, more selectively, India,⁴¹ suggests that the rise of dormitories and industrial hostels is expanding the ability of employers to control labour well beyond the actual labour process. The tightening of labour control, on the basis of what Pun Ngai and Chris Smith have defined as the ‘dormitory labour regime’, has direct effects on the expansion of exploitation rates. In these contexts, any distinction between work and reproductive time becomes blurred, as social reproduction becomes fully individualised and subsumed into the value-generating process. Moreover, as noted by Hannah Schling with reference to the Czech Republic, in dormitories ‘non-waged time’ becomes fundamental to the production of compliant labouring subjects.⁴²

The second way in which social reproduction realms and activities directly contribute to value-generation across today’s ‘global factory’⁴³ is through their absorption of the systematic externalisation of costs of social reproduction.⁴⁴ Across the greatly informal and informalised majority world, social reproductive realms – the household, the village, the community – and activities – housework as well as other forms of unpaid work generally (albeit not only) performed by women⁴⁵ – are deployed as a systematic subsidy to capital. In fact, in contexts where neither employers nor the state bear any of the costs for socially reproducing labour, everything is dumped onto the shoulders of workers and their kin, family and community ties. While in the West the externalisation of costs of social reproduction has been explained in terms of a crisis of care or crisis of social reproduction more broadly,⁴⁶ in contexts that neither experienced the welfare state nor its disciplining role on capital, this externalisation can be better understood as directly serving the purpose of shaping the capitalist relation in ways that impose unpaid, wageless work and life as a direct subsidy to production. Again, the effect is one in which exploitation rates can be expanded, through a cut in wages and social contributions, with losses naturalised and internalised by the labouring poor and their social and economic networks.

Finally, as I have discussed at length elsewhere with reference to the Sweatshop Regime,⁴⁷ a third way in which social reproduction realms and activities directly constitute value is through the expansion of processes

of formal subsumption of labour, made possible by the fragmentation and decomposition of labour processes worldwide. The proliferation of tasks and activities decentralised to armies of home-based workers shows the crucial role that formal subsumption of labour still plays vis-à-vis processes of value-generation. Hardly a remnant of the past, as it is often portrayed, this process makes any distinction between production and social reproduction – or work and life – irrelevant, as their times are conflated, and all is subject to the laws of value. Since Maria Mies wrote *The Lacemakers of Narsapur*, thousands more villages have been swallowed by the logics of contemporary neoliberal capitalism, where ‘unfree’ labour relations represent a stable ‘form of exploitation’.⁴⁸ These informal and wageless workers live, at once, within and beyond the Marxian labour theory of value, subverting and blurring our theoretical categories, and challenging our politics.

Theories of inclusion for a politics of inclusion

One may rightly ask, at the end of this analysis: why should we care at all about theoretical distinctions and divisions, if these can be overcome in politics? In short: can we still support a theory where value-generation remains anchored to the realm of commodity production, if our politics can then transcend its boundaries? I argue that this would be difficult for two reasons. First, theoretical distinctions are always political. The theoretical exclusion of social reproduction realms and activities from the arena of value-generation posits, implicitly or explicitly, a hierarchy of exploitation, while also constructing the category of ‘labour’ on highly unequal terms, premised around the wage form. As the wage is the cost of labour, but not necessarily its value, this choice embraces a capital-centric conceptualisation of toil, productivity (too often conflated with exploitation) and reward.⁴⁹ In political terms, arguing that labour struggles can articulate with the struggles of the wageless is not quite the same thing as enlarging the social parameters of what is defined as a labour struggle to accommodate all those whose work is subjected and subordinated to the capitalist relation in more hidden ways. The former approach still presupposes a distinction, in the struggle, between the waged and the unwaged; it

indirectly embraces the ‘primacy’ of wage-labour over work, and, as such, cannot but fracture solidarities. The latter approach, by contrast, is far more likely to provide a broader basis for organising and include all struggles (of the waged or unwaged) as labour (and, ultimately, reproductive) struggles.

Second, if we are serious about the need to develop a ‘unitary theory’ of capitalism, and avoid dualist understandings of the mode of production, we cannot conflate the (current) western experience of labour and work with that ‘normalised’ across the world economy. In fact, the western experience is hardly representative of how the majority toils on this planet. In contexts dominated by the informal economy and informalised labour – in which almost two-thirds of the people of the world make their livelihood – approaches to value proposing a neat separation between what produces and what does not produce surplus are based on an inaccurate and highly dualistic understanding of how capitalism works.⁵⁰ While undoubtedly we need to avoid dualist theories conceptualising capital and patriarchy as autonomous social relations,⁵¹ at the same time we cannot develop any unitary theory of capitalism based on understandings of value generating other highly problematic dichotomies.

In mapping the vast world of India’s unorganised labour, Barbara Harriss-White and Nandini Gooptu highlight the ways in which large segments of informal and informalised labour – in India and elsewhere – are not so much engaged in class struggle, as they are still trapped in ‘struggles over class’.⁵² They are still fighting to be recognised as a labouring class and develop their own consciousness. We can help the wageless in their struggle for recognition, and support them through a politics of inclusion, only by developing inclusive theories and categories of analysis in the first place.

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Notes

1. Maria Rosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1972); Leopoldina Fortunati, *The Arcane of Reproduction: Housework, Prostitution, Labour and Capital* (Autonomedia, 1981; originally published in Italian as *L’Arcano de/la Reproduzione: Casalinghe, Prostitute, Operai e Capitale*, Venezia: Marsilio Ed-

- itori, 1981); Leopoldina Fortunati and Silvia Federici, *Il Grande Calibano: Storia del Corpo Sociale Ribelle nella Prima Fase del Capitale* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1984); Maria Mies, *The Lace Makers of Narsapur: Indian Housewives Produce for the World Market* (London: Zed, 1982); Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (London: Zed, 1986); Antonella Picchio, *Social Reproduction: The Political Economy of The Labour Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2004).
2. Tithi Bhattacharya, ed. *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Re-Centering Oppression* (London: Pluto, 2017).
 3. Bhattacharya, 'How Not to Skip Class', in *Social Reproduction Theory*, 68–93; see also Cinzia Arruzza, 'Functionalist, Deterministic, Reductionist: Social Reproduction Feminism and its Critics', *Science and Society* 80:1 (2016), 9–30.
 4. See also Lisa Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward a Unitary Theory* (London: Pluto, 1983).
 5. Nancy Fraser, 'Crisis of Care? On the Social Reproductive Contradictions of Contemporary Capitalism', in Bhattacharya, ed. *Social Reproduction Theory*, 21–36; see also Nancy Fraser 'Behind Marx's Hidden Abode: For an Expanded Conception of Capitalism', *New Left Review* 86 (2014): 55–72.
 6. Arruzza, 'Functionalist, Deterministic, Reductionist'.
 7. David McNally 'Intersections and Dialectics: Critical Reconstructions in Social Reproduction Theory', in *Social Reproduction Theory* pp. 94–111. On the basis of a broader review of scholarship on Intersectionality, and in the context of what I see as a worthy intellectual and political project, Ashley Bohrer has recently highlighted productive ways in which Marxism and Intersectionality approaches may articulate and complement each another. See Ashley Bohrer 'Intersectionality and Marxism: A Critical Historiography', *Historical Materialism* 26:2 (2018).
 8. Dalla Costa and James, *The Power of Women*; Fortunati, *The Arcane of Reproduction*.
 9. Jan Breman and Marcel Van der Linden, 'Informalising the Economy: The Return of the Social Question at a Global Level', *Development and Change* 45 (2014): 920–40.
 10. Fortunati, *The Arcane of Reproduction*.
 11. Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*; Fortunati and Federici, *Il Grande Calibano*.
 12. Mies, *The Lacemakers*; Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation*.
 13. In fact, already in her study of lacemaking Mies understands housewifisation as a capitalist patriarchal arrangement and an imperial import, at once. Indian women were underpaid to produce in peripheral homes what British women performed unpaid in imperial homes.
 14. Earlier these women were denied any right to a family as an economic unit as envisaged under capitalism for the 'free' industrial working classes. They were only 'granted' these rights so that capital could externalise social and biological reproduction costs and health replenishment to 'the home'. See Rhoda Reddock, *Women, Labour and Struggle in 20th century Trinidad and Tobago, 1898-1960* (The Hague: Institute of Social Studies, 1984). For a gendered account of indenture, illustrating the violent ways in which women were coerced into reproductive servitude, including sexual servitude, see Gaiutra Bahadur's masterful *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* (London: Hurst and Co, 2013).
 15. Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Random House, 1983).
 16. Picchio, *Social Reproduction*.
 17. Sebastien Rioux, 'Embodied Contradictions: Capitalism, social reproduction and body formation', *Women's Studies International Forum* 48 (2015), 194–202.
 18. Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume I* (London: Penguin Classics, 1990; reprint of Pelican Books edition, 1976).
 19. David Harvey, 'Marx's Refusal of the Labour Theory of Value', accessed 1 March 2018, <http://davidharvey.org/2018/03/marxs-refusal-of-the-labour-theory-of-value-by-david-harvey/>
 20. Diane Elson, 'The Value Theory of Labour', in *Value: the Representation of Labour in Capitalism*, ed. Diane Elson (London: CSE Books, 1979).
 21. Paul Smith, 'Domestic Labour and Marx's Theory of Value', in *Feminism and Materialism (RLE Feminist Theory): Women and Modes of Production*, eds. A. Kuhn and A.M. Wolpe (London and New York: Routledge, 1978), 198–220).
 22. Cindi Katz, 'Vagabond Capitalism and the Necessity of Social Reproduction', *Antipode* 33 (2001), 709–728; Catherine Mitchell, Sally Marston and Cindi Katz, 'Introduction: Life's Work: An Introduction, Review, and Critique', *Antipode* 35:3 (2003), 415–42; Isabella Bakker, 'Social Reproduction and the Constitution of a Gendered Political Economy', *New Political Economy* 12 (2007), 541–556.
 23. Rioux, 'Embodied Contradictions'; see also Timothée Haug, 'The Capitalist Metabolism: An Unachieved Subsumption of Life under the Value-form', *Journal for Cultural Research* 22:2 (2018), 191–203; and Rohini Hensman 'Revisiting the Domestic Labour Debate: An Indian Perspective', *Historical Materialism* 19:3 (2011), 3–28.
 24. In many instances, the dismissal of arguments connecting social reproduction to value is based on their mischaracterisation as claims merely stressing the 'deserving', 'worthy' or 'useful' nature of reproductive work or realms. It is on the basis of this mischaracterisation that such arguments are depicted as emotional. However, feminist analyses stressing the value-producing nature of social reproduction do engage with Marxian notions of value, as linked to processes of labour surplus extraction. It should also be noted that one of the most irrational comparison deployed by orthodox Marxism to dismiss reproductive work as non-value producing is the impossibility of increases in its productivity. However, first, as argued here, this schema should not be imposed beyond the remit of the labour theory of value. Second, even if we were to engage with the argument on its own ground, we should at least acknowledge that productivity and exploitation are not the same thing. In *Capital*, Marx presents them as an identity to *deconstruct* productivity as a bourgeois concept, and show how surplus value is instead generated by labour. Moreover, we know from Marx that relative surplus value extraction (linked to productivity) is only one way to appropriate surplus. The other is through absolute surplus value extraction, which expands the working day to its very limits and totalises the workers' subsumption into the pro-

- duction cycle. Arguably, the total involvement required by some reproductive activities, and the bodily depletion they entail, can be easily equated with processes of absolute surplus extraction. In a similar vein, Silvia Federici sketches the link between reproductive activities and processes of formal subsumption of labour. Silvia Federici, 'Marx and Feminism', in *TripleC* 16:2 (2018), 468–75.
25. See also more recent studies on homework in Italy, for example Tania Toffanin, *Fabbriche Invisibili: Storie di Donne, Lavoranti a Domicilio* (Ombre Corte: Invisible Factories: Stories of Women, Homeworkers, 2016).
26. Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Brooklyn: PM Press, 2012).
27. For example, Katz, 'Vagabond Capitalism'; Bakker, 'Social Reproduction'.
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